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Seven-day Meditation Retreat
Kallara Conference Centre – September 2019
Transcription from Audio Recordings

File 1a – Saturday afternoon guided meditation

So welcome everyone to seven days of – well, you've got no idea what's going to happen. And that's what's so great about it. You think you know what's going to happen, and some of you are probably quite anxious about what might happen, but maybe something completely new will happen that you've never felt before. You just don't know. And how exciting is that – not knowing what's going to happen.

So don't be scared because you can't really be scared of what you don't know. But that's your deepest fear really, of the unknown. What you're really scared of is the known, your past experiences – you're scared that that's going to keep repeating for the rest of your life. But this is all about the end of experience, the end of repetition, the end of your personal past. But most people are very attached to their personal past and it's very difficult to give that up and to simply be here.

There's this deep fear of not remembering, but right now sitting here there is nothing you need to be thinking about, nothing you need to remember. But of course remembering or thinking is habitual and the mind is not going to give up without a fight. But the thing is to not fight back. This is using your intelligence, seeing very clearly how your mind works and how ridiculous it is to just keep rehashing the past again and again and again.

So this is seven days of looking deeply into you, what makes you tick. Going more and more deeply into your body, the sensations of your body, using your body as an anchor. And the more you do that the more clearly you see the workings of the mind. So we're not here to try and stop the mind. But when you see clearly how it works – that's what gives you the power and the strength to simply be here. And eventually the mind gives up, when you become so strong and so still that it hasn't got a hope of disturbing you, it hasn't got a hope of undermining you. So remember this is not a fight, it's not a struggle; you need to become stronger in a quiet, deep, intelligent way.

So in a way you never understand anything, you only realise something. And you realise things in your body, with your body, and your brain is part of your body. So thinking is not an intelligent thing to do. Even though we're taught to think and encouraged to think from a very early age, when you see what's involved in thinking it's not intelligent at all. But the brain is different altogether. The brain is what your body needs – not the mind. The brain is what helps your body function, see things, do things. And the most intelligent actions are the actions that you make without thinking. The bravest actions are the ones that you make without thinking.

So take your attention to the top of your head and feel the sensation on the top of your head however it feels right now. And there is no perfect way to feel. There's nothing you should be feeling right now. Whatever you're feeling is fine. And breathe deeply into the belly, using the breath as an anchor in your body. Feel the sensation of your eyelids on your eyes. Feel your breath going through your nostrils, your mouth, your lips, your jaw, your chin. This isn't about visualising, but trying to feel the sensation in your body, whatever it is.

Feel your shoulders, and keep breathing into the belly. So even if you feel tension in any part of your body, during these sits try and sit still with that tension and watch it. Watch your reaction to the tension or pain, discomfort, or comfort or pleasure – watch your reaction. But do your best to keep your body as still as possible during the sit. Go to your left shoulder and feel your shoulder. Go down your arm to your left elbow and feel your elbow. Then go down to your left hand and feel your hand, and feel your thumb and each finger. Keep breathing into the belly.

Then go to your right shoulder and feel your shoulder. Go down your arm to your right elbow, then down to your right hand and feel your hand and feel your thumb and each finger. Take your attention to your chest and as you breathe in and out, and it's good to breathe in and out through the nose, feel the gently movement of your chest with the breath – a gentle rising and falling.

Then go down to the abdomen. So this is the place in the body that many people want to avoid. This is where we feel fear. We feel sick with fear at times. So it's a very good place to use as your home base, deep in the body. And it's a very tangible place in the body to feel the breath. You can feel your abdomen rising and falling as your body breathes. And you don't need to think to breathe. And in a way that's the fear – "If I don't think my body will die, I will die," because if you think you start and end with this body there's a deep fear of death of the body.

So your breath in the abdomen is your home base. This is where we keep coming back to, without focusing but using the breath down there as an anchor, deep within your body. Feel your thighs, your knees, your left foot, and your right foot. Then feel your spine from the top of the spine, down your back to the bottom of the spine. So try and keep your spine straight, but not in a rigid way – just straight and flexible. This isn't about being rigid.

So then again feel your whole body. Be aware of your whole body sitting here in this room right now. And you're nowhere else right now. You're here, your body is here. There's no part of you that's anywhere else. But each time you think, you're pretending that you're somewhere else – anywhere else but here. But the fact is, your body is still here.

So this practice is very simple. It's not easy but it's very simple, very direct. Each time you realise you've been lost in your own personal past – because really that's what thinking is – bring your attention back to your body, and primarily the breath in the abdomen, the rise and the fall of the abdomen with the breath. So this is the basic practice. It might seem too simple.

And you need to do it again and again and again, just as you've spent your life thinking again and again and again. So you need to persevere. Keep coming back to your body and primarily the breath in the abdomen. Don't look for any particular experience. Try and be open to whatever happens, whatever is happening right now.